

What Your Alarm Company Should Do For You

In an effort to reduce false alarms, your alarm company is required, by law, to take certain proactive measures.

1. Your alarm/monitoring company must attempt to verify every alarm signal, except duress or hold-up, **before** requesting police dispatch.
2. If it is determined that an alarm signal is false, your alarm/monitoring company *must* immediately attempt to cancel the police dispatch. ***Don't let your alarm company tell you that this cannot be done.*** You cannot personally cancel a police dispatch; this must be done by your alarm/monitoring company.
3. Your alarm company must notify you, in writing, within 72 hours, if they have requested a police dispatch to your alarm location.
4. Your alarm company must not request police dispatch to an alarm activation until the alarm system is properly registered.
5. When you have a new alarm system installed in your home or business, your alarm company must provide you with a completed and signed Installation Certificate. This Certificate affirms that:
 - the system meets or exceeds installation standards,
 - all persons responsible for the operation of the system have been fully trained on its proper use, and
 - the alarm company has explained the requirements for registration and has completed and provided the alarm user with a copy of the registration form.

False Alarm Response Fee Schedule

Listed below is the schedule of fees charged to alarm users for police response to false alarm activations. False alarm response fees apply only if the police are dispatched to an alarm location and the alarm signal is determined by investigating officers to be a false alarm.

Residential False Alarm Response Fees

<u>False Alarm Occurrence</u>	<u>False Alarm Response Fee</u>	<u>Cumulative Total</u>
1 st	\$ 0	\$ 0
2 nd	25	25
3 rd	50	75
3 rd – Inspection of System Required Plus Fee		
4 th	75	150
5 th	100	250
6 th	150	400
6 th – Upgrade of System Required Plus Fee		
7 th	200	600
8 th	250	850
9 th	300	1150
10 th	400	1550
11 th	500	2050
12 th	600	2650
13 th	700	3350
14 th	800	4150
15 th & Up	1000	5150

Non-Residential False Alarm Response Fees (False Alarms 1-15 Same as Above)

16 th	1500	6650
17 th	2000	8650
18 th	2500	11150
19 th	3000	14150
20 th & Up	4000	18150



Montgomery County, MD
Department of Police

False Alarm Reduction Section

Burglar Alarm Law Summary



Department of Police
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Background

The Montgomery County alarm law was adopted because of concerns over police officer safety and to eliminate the misuse of police resources. Unfounded alarm calls also reduce the police department's effectiveness and undermines our ability to respond to more critical calls.

False Alarm Reduction Section

The False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of the Montgomery County Department of Police was created to administer the County's alarm law. The FARS's main function is to reduce the number of false alarms to which police respond each year. The FARS licenses all alarm companies, registers alarm users, sends notification of false alarms and invoices for excessive false alarms to alarm users, ensures that appropriate inspections and upgrades of alarm systems occur, and handles informal appeals regarding the false designation of alarm activations.

What is a False Alarm?

The alarm law defines a false alarm as ***any alarm signal that elicits a response by police personnel and for which there is no evidence of criminal activity to justify a police response.*** This simply means that if a police officer responds to an alarm signal and, after investigation, finds no evidence that criminal activity either had occurred or was occurring, the officer will designate the alarm signal as a false alarm. A false alarm may be caused by factors such as human error or equipment malfunction.

How The Law Works

Every alarm user is allowed one "free" false alarm in a calendar year. False alarm response fees are imposed for the second and each subsequent false alarm. The false alarm response fee for residential and commercial alarm users begins at \$25 for the second false alarm. Fees escalate to \$1000 ***per false alarm*** for residential alarm users and \$4000 ***per false alarm*** for commercial alarm users. Please refer to the False Alarm Response Fee Schedule on the back panel of this brochure for more detailed information.

On the third false alarm in a calendar year, the alarm user must have the alarm system inspected by a licensed alarm company. The purpose of this inspection is to ensure that all mechanical components of the alarm system are in good operating condition, and also affords your alarm company an opportunity to re-educate all those using the system on its proper use.

On the sixth false alarm in a calendar year, the alarm user must have the alarm system upgraded to meet current County installation standards.

You will be considered in violation of the alarm law ***if you fail to:***

- register your alarm system,
- pay imposed false alarm response fees, or
- upgrade the alarm system, as required.

Alarm companies are prohibited from requesting police dispatch to your alarm signals for seven days after registration of the alarm system, unless there is a waiver granted by the FARS due to imminent danger to people or property. This is referred to as a "burn-in" or "soak" period.

Alarm User Registration

- Every ***burglar alarm*** system must be registered with the FARS ***before*** the system is placed into service. Registration does not apply to either fire or car alarm systems.
- It is your alarm/monitoring company's responsibility to provide you with burglar alarm registration information at the time of sale or installation of your alarm system. Every alarm/monitoring company that conducts business within Montgomery County must be licensed by the FARS and must provide their license number and your registration number to Emergency Communications Center operators when requesting dispatch to an alarm activation.
- If you do not have an alarm/monitoring company, you may obtain registration information directly from the FARS.
- A non-refundable \$30 registration fee must be paid with each initial registration. A separate registration must be obtained for each alarm user and/or location. Registrations must be renewed on a biennial (every two years) basis at a cost of \$10. Failure to renew when required will result in no "free" false alarms and the imposition of an additional \$100 charge for every false alarm.
- Alarm registrations are not transferable from one alarm user to another or from one location to another. However, if you change alarm companies, *mailing* address, or contact person information, you are ***not*** required to re-register your alarm system. You are required, however, to advise the FARS in writing of said change(s).
- You and your alarm company must notify the FARS when there is a relocation or change in ownership of a property.